

The Followership of Growth in Christ: Walking with Jesus

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[0:00] All right, well, let's pray together, and we'll start in tonight's lesson. Father, thank you for the privilege of being here this evening. You always energize me when I stand before your people, your precious, precious souls, your beloved, your dear ones, and anticipate teaching them about some aspect of your character, your truth, that I get to do that, that I was chosen by you to follow that path and do that for my life's calling is nothing short of astounding to me.

So very humbling, God, that we all can come together and be under your word. Father, you're so good and so kind. You're so patient with us.

We all have sinned since Sunday, and yet you love us and you act in such great kindness, tenderness, graciousness toward us.

And so how can we not thank you? How can we not be truly overwhelmed in our hearts when we allow ourselves to consider the precious nature of your cross where you gave Jesus for us?

And now we are your purchased ones, your redeemed ones. So thank you, dear Lord, for the truth of your word. Thank you for your Holy Son, your Holy Spirit, Father.

[1:34] And thank you for this time that we have together. Please open our spiritual eyes to try and understand and see the way of walking with Jesus. What a big topic.

I pray you'll help us boil it down tonight into a few principles that we can leave here with tonight that will carry us forward into the next Lord's Day if it's your will to give us breath for life.

We thank you for these wonderful privileges. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. What we'll be dealing with tonight as we continue in our discussion of growing in the Lord Jesus Christ is the followership of growth in Christ.

Now, I don't know if I explained that last time. So you understand. It didn't translate well in Polish. But for you guys, I think you understand followership. Yeah, it's real simple.

I'm not trying to be cute. I just needed F's so that my alliteration would work. The first one was foundation. This one's followership. Not fellowship.

[2:43] Followership. So the followership of growth in Christ. What does it look like? What does it mean to follow Jesus or to pursue Jesus heavily?

Intensely. Intentionally. So this is an intense, intentional followership. This is not haphazard. This is not if I have time at the end of the day to think about Him.

If I'm not too busy, then Jesus can be part of my life today. But this is no, I am following hard on the Lord Jesus Christ.

He's my life. This is what I mean. And what we'll deal with tonight specifically in that followership is walking with Jesus. Now this is a theme that is very familiar to you.

We spend a good bit of time talking about this, particularly on Wednesday evenings as we talk about what it means for us to be conformed to the image of Jesus.

[3:45] I miss the point of the Christian life if I'm not becoming more like Jesus before I go to heaven. I'm not here. I see my providers here.

I'm not here simply to provide for my family. That's important. I have to do that. I need to do that or I'm worse than an unbeliever. But that's not why we're here.

I'm not here just to raise children. I'm not here just to be married. I'm not here just to be a kid and grow up lest I leave them out.

I'm here as a Christian to grow in likeness to Jesus Christ. Whether I'm working or you made it. Bless the Lord. We said a quick under our breath prayer for you when she said she was in Virginia Beach. I'm like, oh my goodness. Back in this. What was I saying?

[4:42] While we're here. Yeah, yeah. General. So when you're married, you're married in Jesus. How do you pursue Jesus married?

What does that look like? How do you pursue Jesus as a mom, a dad, a provider? Are you following hard on Jesus in all those areas of your life so that the way that you go about living in those roles looks like you love the Lord?

Folks, listen. As a pastor, if I'm not raising up God's people in that reality and constantly reminding you of that and trying to live as an example of it, I'm not helping you be the church.

This is who we are. And so while we can do a lot of different things, if we're not doing those things in conformity to Jesus and to be conformed to Jesus, then we're missing the point of being the church.

Good night. I can't think of anything worse than that. To be a Christian and miss the point of being a Christian. Alright, now, let me share some wisdom with you from Dr. John MacArthur.

[5:56] He says, it is impossible to have a Christian lifestyle without knowing the realities of the life that Christ has provided.

Now, I want to ask you as we get started, how do you understand that statement? How do you understand that statement? You see where I've made the emphases here on three different words in that sentence.

It is impossible to have a Christian lifestyle without knowing the realities of the life that Christ has provided.

How do you understand that statement as it applies to your life? Yes, Alonzo's going to take a stab. Well, to me, if you don't know how Christ lives, you cannot live the lifestyle that you want to live and we can't do it.

Can't do it. Amen. Great. Alright, we're building on that. That's beautiful. One thing that I think about is peace. Okay. And so, even though our natural bent is to be not to be bent, right?

[7:14] We tend to want more, more, more, or whatever is to be that thing. but we cannot become intense without knowing the reality that Christ died for us and lives in us now and so therefore understanding that in the fact that God is sovereign, we can't live the Christian lifestyle of peace.

good. Thank you. So you took, you guys together, you just took a specific aspect of that statement and applied it.

So this is what it would look like if I didn't have that reality that Alonzo spoke about in terms of peace in my life. I couldn't have that. It would be a false peace. A spurious peace.

Right. So this is calling us to live who we are. That's another way of saying it. It is impossible for you to live who you are if you don't understand who you are in the Lord.

Who is Jesus in you? That's who you are. And so your life should show that. Your life should show that Jesus lives in you. And for those of us as I see the couples here, those of us who are married, it should start in your marriage.

[8:42] The way you relate to your spouse should be the first place that you are living out this reality. That because Jesus does live in you and you are a Christian, you can.

It's not only possible. You can. It's not potential. You can. Live a lifestyle, a married lifestyle based on who God is in you.

You can work like that. You can do everything you do. We're going to see that in a minute. All right. So the realities of your new spiritual life, which Jesus provides for you, are what you grow to show. You grow to show the realities. Michelle just spoke to this in the way of peace. You learn about these realities of your new life in Christ in Scripture.

Scripture. So what we're saying is it's impossible for you to grow spiritually apart from God's Word. The less time, energy, and effort you spend in the Word, the less you will grow to show the wonderful realities of Jesus living in you.

[9:56] Okay? You're with me on that? People think if I go to church on Sunday, I'm good.

Now listen, I hope when you come to church on Sunday, you grow. I hope you hear things that encourage you and challenge you. But if all you're depending on is church on Sunday to help you grow in your spiritual life, you're going to be in a tough way.

Not because we're not doing a good job on Sunday of worshiping and encouraging and teaching the Word. But that's a pretty meager spiritual diet, isn't it? So you're going to, what's that, Trev? A lot of people do that. Yes. And so here's what you're going to be. You're going to be spiritually anemic. You're going to be spiritually anemic.

And your life's going to show it. And again, for you married people, I'm hammering marriage tonight. For you married folk, that's the first place it's going to show up is in your marriage.

[11:02] That spiritual anemia is going to show up in your relationship with your spouse. Now look at this one. You can't walk with Jesus if you don't know Jesus.

You can't grow to show Jesus in your life unless you're learning from Him. And you can only learn from Jesus as you love Him and keep His commandments. You do this from your inner person or from your heart.

We make a big deal of the heart here in the teaching at our church. Alright, so your spiritual growth is heart, mind, soul, and spirit growth.

That's what we're encompassing when we talk about your spiritual growth. but these are not four parts of you necessarily. The Bible uses heart, mind, soul, and spirit to describe the same or a similar thing.

It's talking about your inner person. It's talking about the inner you which is the real you. It's the heart and soul literally of who you are.

[12:15] This is your heart. You've heard me on Sunday talk about personhood. In listening to God, the first item I did was personhood.

And then I did something else that began with a P. That's why I alliterate so you can remember it. Participation?

Anyway, personhood was something that I talked about extensively. That is the core of who you are. Who God has made you to be.

That's what you live out of. That's who you live out of. Okay? Now, you can't help that. And so, if I'm around you long enough, sooner or later, the real you is going to come out.

Now, do you understand why I'm hammering marriage? Because you're around each other all the time. And you can't help it. And so, the real you is going to come out.

[13:14] And this is what we're talking about. So, your heart, hear this now, your heart is your control center for living.

So, according to Scripture, your heart is made up of your thoughts, your intentions, your beliefs, your desires, your attitudes.

These operations take place in what we call the mind. mind. So, we can think of your heart as your reasoning center. So, while we may mention these aspects of your heart and kind of compartmentalize them for the sake of discussion, this is what makes up you.

And at the core of who you are, you are a reasoning machine. machine. You are a making meaning of life machine. Everything that comes at you, you make meaning of.

You interpret. You perceive and then you do some mental math to try to come up with what does that mean for me? Why is this happening to me?

[14:31] What am I supposed to do about this in this moment? moment. This is how we go through life. Now, this is one of the reasons Proverbs gives us this particular admonition.

If you go to Proverbs 4, verse 23. Folks, this is critical, critical teaching that is absent from so many ministries. People are not helped to understand the operations of their heart.

But the more you understand how your heart works, how your inner person works, your inner man, your spiritual person works, the more you can give yourself to this issue of conformity to Christ.

This is where you're conformed. Your behavior will follow on who you are in your heart. Proverbs 4, 23.

I left that picture up there a little longer so you could see it. Alright, so we're on Proverbs 4, 23. Travis, do you have that, brother? Would you read that?

[15:39] Alright, and what translation is that? ESV, alright. Someone else with a different translation.

Let's just hear a couple. Alright, Dora? Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow to sin from life. So, yours said vigilance, yours said diligence.

Alright, watch over your heart with all diligence. Now, in the Hebrew, with all diligence is first in the sentence.

that's how the sentence actually starts in the Hebrew. With all diligence, watch over your heart, for from it flow the issues or springs of life, the matters of life, how you go about living life.

Then it goes on in verse 24, immediately following that, put away from you a deceitful mouth and put devious speech. So, it goes right into this issue of your heart by now saying, watch how you talk.

[16:47] Be careful the kind of speech that comes out of your mouth. Why would they do that? Why would he say that following on something like that? Well, I want to show you why from the New Testament.

And I think I can get there. If you go to Luke chapter 6, remember now, watch over your heart. This is again, watch over your inner man. Watch over your inner person. Watch over how you think, perceive, the attitudes you have, what you value, how you look at life.

Watch over your heart with all diligence, for the matters of your life flow from your heart. Put away from you a deceitful mouth, put devious speech far from you.

Now, I want you to look at Luke 6 45. Luke 6, 45. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good.

[17:50] And the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil. For his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart. There you go. You can tie that with Proverbs 4, 24.

our hearts are always going to be revealed in how we speak and behave.

What you think is always going to be revealed in how you live. I just need to give you a little time. Sooner or later, you're going to show me who you really are.

And now, it's no surprise to any of us that who we really are, are people saved by the grace of God who still have to deal with sin. So none of us should be shocked when the real us comes out in a sinful way.

We need to remember that we belong to Jesus. We are His and He's given us a new heart. But we still have sin to deal with in our life, right? So we shouldn't be too shocked when that person sitting next to you as your spouse or one of your children ends up sinning.

[19:06] Alright. It's very, very important that we put these things together. Now look at this on the screen. Your mind is this. We understand your mind is where you process the issues or the matters of life according to this verse we just looked at.

So it's where you do your thinking. It's where you reason. It's where you perceive, plan, and interpret or make meaning of what you encounter in life.

The way you think about your marriage comes from your heart. You are using your mind, your reasoning abilities, to reason about or to make meaning about your marriage.

marriage. How much of what you think about your marriage is biblical? Is God centered? Is Jesus pleasing? And then you could just insert any area of your life into that sentence or that question. Is the way that you think about blank Jesus pleasing? Is it biblically sound? Are you acting on that wisdom? It's one thing to know what the Bible says.

[20:20] It's another thing to do it. To let it affect the way you live. Right? That's always the challenge is to take it and put it into action.

So your thoughts, you see it on the bottom of the screen here, your thoughts, intentions, your beliefs and desires, your attitudes, these are all aspects of the whole of your inner man, your inner personhood.

And they help us understand the operations of our heart in relationship to Jesus, his word, to our world, to others. This is Proverbs 4.23.

Let's give you a few other passages on this. Let's look at Matthew 22. Now, how does Jesus speak to this issue of our heart?

He has much to say about this. We're only going to look at a couple passages. The first one is in Matthew 22. 22. You will recognize this. Beginning in verse 37.

[21:26] A man, a lawyer, asked him, Jesus, the question, what's the great commandment? Because there were two schools of thought on the answer to this question, and they had been debating it for hundreds of years and never been able to resolve it.

And so, this man asked Jesus this question thinking, I will trick this rabbi. He won't be able to do any better job than anybody else has been able to do over the centuries. And Jesus didn't hesitate. In verse 37, he answers, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

This is the great and foremost commandment. Now, those aren't three different sections of your personality, they all speak to your inner man, and Jesus is using them for emphasis.

He's saying, love the Lord your God with your entire being, so that there is no aspect of you in your inner man or inner person that is not given over to Christ.

[22:38] Then, in John, the Gospel of John, chapter 14, I'm just showing you places where Jesus spoke of this in the heart.

I may have to take you to one other. I've shown it to you before. So, John 14, verse 1.

Alonzo, you're there? Would you read that? Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. let not your heart be troubled.

Well, you've got to ask yourself, how's my heart? What is it talking? What's my heart? My heart can be troubled. What part of that is me? What's the part of me that gets troubled?

Your mind. Where do your anxious thoughts come from? Your heart. Your mind. That's not your brain. Your brain is not the same as your heart.

[23:36] heart. This is where psychology and humanistic sociology, etc., locate these things. In the brain. And so, their treatment processes for this kind of stuff, anxiety or whatever it is, is to give you a pill to help change the chemical dynamics of your brain.

Only to find out that all it does is numb you to the reality. It doesn't change anything in your inner man. Because your brain is not the issue. Your heart is. Now, I'm just quoting Bible to you right now, right?

Okay. So, John 14, 1, Jesus says, don't let your heart be troubled. And so, what does He tell your heart to do? Believe. Well, where do you do your believing?

In your heart, your mind. Believe also in Me. Do not let your heart be troubled. The word there means anxious or agitated. And so, this calls for belief or faith.

Faith. Then, if you look at verse 15, if you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

[24:51] Love. Where do we love from? Our hearts. This is why on Valentine's Day we draw. I can't do it. How do they do it? How do you do that? I see people...

Anyway, it's a heart. And then 21, if you look at that verse, He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me.

Now, didn't Jesus just tell us that the greatest thing we can do is love the Lord our God with all of our heart, mind, soul, strength? This is why I'm showing you these verses.

We've been told that's the greatest commandment. Well, here's Jesus saying, He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.

Judas, not Iscariot, said to him, Lord, what then has happened that you are going to disclose yourself to us and not to the world? and Jesus answered and said to him, if anyone loves Me.

[25:56] There's the difference between us and the world. We've come to love Jesus who first loved us. He will keep My Word. Anyone who loves Me will keep My Word.

You will want to obey Jesus. And My Father will love Him and we will come to Him and make our abode with Him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words, and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.

This is why I don't have a lot of trouble saying to people who come in to talk to Me or see Me and the track record of their life does not show this kind of love for God, for God's people, for what God

loves, His Word.

I say to them, friend, you should have cause for pause here because the Bible clearly says that if you love Him, your life will reflect that love by loving what He loves. And I don't see a track record of you loving the Word.

I don't see you having a track record of loving God's people. I don't see you having a track record of loving Jesus enough to say no to yourself. You see?

[27:02] So hit pause. We got a problem. You tracking with me? And then in verse 27, peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you.

Michelle, that's very interesting, isn't it? She brought this one up. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Now notice, do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful, anxious.

Don't let your heart be filled with anxiety over the issues of the world or of life or the matters of life.

Don't live like God is not in control or that you don't belong to Him.

Don't live like that. If you go to the world and you ask them to help you with these issues, they're going to give you a pill. Now again, I'm not against medicine, folks.

Don't think me against medicine. I think medicine can be an important tool. I'm trying to tell you medicine will not heal the issues of your heart. That's all I'm saying. I'm not poo-pooing medicine, okay?

[28:04] I've been taking medicine this week, an anti-inflammatory, and I'm thanking God for it, I'm telling you. I thank the Lord that when my wife was in the hospital, they gave her a cocktail right into her veins, baby, and it made all the difference and got her through that episode.

No, your pastors are not against medicine. We're against people being told that you can heal the issues of your heart apart from the way that God has said to heal.

We can't do that. Alright, so we are to love, there's some of the verses there that I just mentioned to you, so we are to love, honor, and obey Jesus from the heart, that is with our entire being.

99% of the time when you hear Greg or myself teaching or preaching on the matters of the heart or something about your heart, this is what we're talking about from the Bible. It's very important that we know how Jesus wants us to relate to Him from the depths of our hearts, from our inner man.

And so 99% of the spiritual work that brings about spiritual growth takes place in your heart. Not your brain, your heart, which is where you do your thinking and your reasoning.

[29:33] One other passage that, well, yeah, I've got to show you, shoot. Okay, Mark chapter 7. Now, many of you, Lonza will know this, Michelle and them will know this, the Wrights will know this, those of you who've been here, the Pikes will know this for a while, Jeremy and Brenda.

We've turned to this passage often in the past, Mark 7. And the passage answers this question, where does sin come from?

Where does your sin come from when you sin? Here's the answer, verse 18 of Mark 7. And Jesus said to them, are you so lacking in understanding also? They didn't understand the parables that he just used and taught from.

Do you not understand that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot pollute, corrupt, defile him? Now, he's speaking about spiritual defilement here, isn't he?

Spiritual defilement, not physical. Because it doesn't go into his... Why doesn't it defile him? Why doesn't what comes from outside and goes in?

[30:39] Why does that not corrupt you spiritually? Because it's not going into your heart. Right? He's talking about food. Thus he declared all foods clean.

Because that was the issue he was dealing with from the previous encounter. And so now he says this in verse 20, that which proceeds out of a person, that is what defiles the man.

for from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, or sexual sins, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting.

So that would be like jealousy and I guess envy, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, there's envy, slander, pride, foolishness.

Now how does he cap it all off in verse 23? All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man. The indictment that he's making here as he says this, if you look over in verse 6, and Jesus said to them, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites.

[31:52] Here are your religious hypocrites. This people honors me with their lips, but their what is far from me? Heart. Heart.

Folks, this is always the issue. So when Jeff Jackson, your pastor, stands before you on Sunday and preaches the gospel to you from God's word, I have a target in mind.

Every time I look into your eyes, I see heart and I'm aiming right at it. Everything I do on Sunday is aimed at your heart, your inner person, your spiritual self before the Lord, because that's the only thing that's going to survive when you die.

Your soul is going to stand before the Lord to give an account of your deeds. And we just saw that all of what you speak and do comes from your heart. When you speak and do from a heart to please Jesus, those are considered good works and precious gems, stones, and they will survive the refining fire of God when you meet Him.

And you will be rewarded for those things. For all those things that you speak and do that are not done for pleasing the Lord Jesus or out of a desire for God to be glorified or honored, those things will be wood, hay, and stubble and won't stand the refiner's fire.

[33:18] And you will not receive any reward, yet you will escape judgment. Okay? See how this works? So this is what we're talking about when we talk about our inner man.

When Jesus then, heart, mind, soul, emphasizes the fullness of our personhood. When Jesus tells us to love Him with all of His heart, mind, soul, His use of heart, mind, and soul don't define three separate aspects of our being.

He uses these terms for emphasis as I mentioned. What's He emphasizing, Jeff? What's He emphasizing? He's describing the fullness, of our personhood. Fullness of our personhood.

Where this gets very interesting to me is how much the body, which is the house for our heart, our soul, our mind, we are embodied souls, how much our tent, or the house for our souls, can affect our souls, and vice versa.

You get sick, medication, or whatever. All kinds of things from your body, women, as you go through a time every month, as you hit menopause, and hormones kick in, as our daughters hit maturity, and hormones change, as our sons get deeper voices, and get taller, right?

[34:50] All of these things can have effects on our spiritual self, because our spiritual self is housed in our body. And so that body-spirit dynamic is very important.

So we are two parts as human beings, not three, two. We call it a duality, we're not tri, we're duo, two.

We are body and soul, or spirit. Yes. And those interactions are very important for us to understand in our walk with Jesus.

If you've ever had anything physical in your life affect your walk with God, you know what I'm talking about. If you've ever seen that happen to someone you care about, it's very real.

And we need to know how to offer people hope in those situations, because Jesus has answers for that. Jesus and God are not blown away by those kinds of instances in our life, and we shouldn't be either.

[35:52] We should be willing to go right up alongside of those folks and love them through, process them through, how they're being affected in their heart by their body, and vice versa.

It doesn't have to be really complicated. I think that those dynamics are complicated in ways that we can't fully understand, but the answers are not complicated.

Jesus is telling us that we're to love God with the entirety of our inner self, so that we think, say, and do according to what pleases Him.

Now, you can't grow to be more like Jesus without growing to love Him with your entire being. You grow to love Jesus and to show Him by walking with Him.

This is what we're talking about. But I don't want you to cheapen that by ignorance, by misunderstanding, or by negligence.

[36:51] We don't need to cheapen that last little statement there, this last paragraph. We are to love God with the entirety of our inner self because we can't grow to be more like Jesus without growing to love Him with our entire being.

That's what we're called to do. And you grow to love Jesus. Say, Jeff, how do I do that? How do I grow in? You grow to love Jesus and then show His character by walking with Him. You have to walk with Him. If Jesus is just an addendum to your weak, you'll be weak spiritually. You've got to deal with that.

This is how a church grows up. This is how a church body matures. This is how we keep the main thing the main thing. We just keep reminding ourselves what this is all!

And this can happen to anybody. The Pharisees were like this. I just read you a statement Jesus said about them. Oh, you honor me with your lips. You put on a good show, but your heart's far from me.

[38:25] And Jesus knows. I may not know. You may fool me, but you can't fool the Lord. That's the danger. Jesus sees the heart.

This is a verse that speaks to this. So, you too outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

That's not a heart that wants to obey the Lord, is it? On another occasion, Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees, the religious leaders of Israel, He said this, this people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me.

Far away from me. Jesus called them hypocrites, fools, blind guides, poison snakes, because they were fakes.

They were just fake. Acting religious is just that, it's acting. But being loved by Jesus and walking with Him in love is very different. And this is why Charles Spurgeon said this, I love Spurgeon, and here is what he said, listen to this, it is not the study of theology, it is not the reading of books upon points of controversy, it is not searching into mysterious prophecy, which will bless your soul, it is looking to Jesus crucified.

[39:48] That is the essential nutriment of the life of faith and mind that you keep to it. Isn't that good? That quote needs to be at the head of every seminary wherever the seminary students are required to go through doors every day.

Because seminary students love to fill their heads with knowledge and they love to argue points of theology. And I would say to all of them, and you will find that you will get out of seminary and go into ministry and the ministry will eat you alive and make it about anything but Jesus if you let it. You say the ministry? Yes. Because there is always a deadline and you are being graded. Don't think I don't know you grade me every Sunday. I work all week on my thesis and then I have to deliver it.

That's good for me. That's a good exercise for me. So what we are developing here in our understanding of spiritual growth is that it involves both a process and a pursuit.

You are in process as you pursue. Okay? And spiritual growth requires both patience and persistence.

[41:15] It is a process. Be patient. It is a pursuit. Persist. Persist. Persist.

Because we are growing to love Jesus, we willingly and obediently pursue becoming more like Jesus. Folks, this is where 90% of the Christian community falls flat on their face.

They don't pursue Jesus. They think that they can pursue the world and pursue life and pursue being busy and all the while they find themselves continuously living in failure to fight the very sin that they know is going on in their life and so two years from now they'll be talking about the same struggle and failure because they're not persisting in pursuing their Lord and Savior.

Including me. None of us default to Jesus. It has to be intentional and it's going to cost you something.

Jesus himself said count the cost of following me. If you think it doesn't cost for Jesus to say deny yourself take up your cross and follow me. If you don't hear cost in that you've missed it.

[42:42] It's huge cost. loving patient persistent pursuit of Jesus is what the Bible calls our walk with the Lord.

So walk with Jesus. It's loving it's patient it's persistent it's a pursuit. Let me show you. Yes.

One of the things that I learned was that you can be persistent in pursuing but you're using the wrong instrument to do your pursuit.

You have something in mind. Well you're reading a devotional that tells a story. I'm in the Word I'm reading the Scripture I'm reading the thing and that's the best.

I've done it I'm doing I want to watch but you're not and you persistently do it every day but you feel like you haven't moved.

[43:46] Okay. Thank you Alonza. That's a good word. Are we tracking with that? Let's put another one in there because this is a good concept for us to think about. Church. Let's do church.

But I go to church. Well which church? What kind of church? What are they teaching? What are they preaching? How do they worship?

What are they encouraging you to keep as the main thing? How are they helping you to do what? So yeah it matters doesn't it?

It matters who you read who you listen to. Well I listen to podcasts. I listen to sermons online. Who? When I hear that don't think I don't automatically have a little chill run up me when I hear y'all say stuff like that.

I do. I'm admitting it. Because my next question is who are you listening to? And let's make sure the first one is your own pastor. Not because I'm all that but because this is where God has you.

[44:51] So I should be first in line. I learned that the hard way. I learned that the hard way. That was a hard lesson for me. To make your pastor the priority in you being taught.

And if you say well my pastor is not teaching me then go find another one. I don't have any problem saying that. Just make sure the issue isn't you. You may not be listening. You may not like what he's saying because he's telling you what you need to hear.

That's a different thing. Yeah be careful who you listen to. Be careful who you read. If you have doubts come ask us. Part of our ministry is referring you to good resources.

That was one of the greatest blessings that Grace Community Church, John MacArthur's church gave to us when we were out there. They taught us who to read. They taught us who to listen to. Because Suzanne and I had a lot of stuff in our life that didn't need to be there in the way of who we listened to, what we've been taught, books on the shelf.

I told you the story. When I got convicted of this out there we had brought oh my goodness I don't even know how many books I had from my eight years of study for my undergrad and my two master's degrees and it was all secular for the most part or it was Christian pablum, oatmeal.

[46:12] I had a ton of them. And I was really convicted and I was keeping them and I was telling Suzanne well I'll keep them so that I can have first hand references.

You know I can go and I can do first reference. And I got so convicted about having them in the house and carrying them around I took boxes and boxes and I put them in a dumpster out in our apartment complex.

Well we went to seminary the next day we were going to school the next day and we're driving and one of my fellow seminarians is in the dumpster up to his hips in the dumpster and he's going through them and looking at them and I stopped and I said Matt Matt here and I stopped and I said Matt what are you doing?

And he goes man somebody threw away all these books these are good first source resources and I went okay. I didn't want him to know they were my books.

I was embarrassed. I got rid of those books. I was the yeah. Yeah you got to burn them. But he knew what he was doing.

[47:21] He was further along than me in his walk. He was from a really good church and so he realized I can keep these some of these and I can use them to resource so that I'm not quoting somebody quoting.

I can look them up myself and say no here it is right here. And that's I but they were I was wanting to replace them. All right. You got me off track.

Let me go back to where I was. Where am I? We're growing to love Jesus. Yes. It's a persistent pursuit. Now I was going to share some scripture with you here. Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord do what?

Well yeah. How about this one? By this we know that we have come to know Christ if we keep his commandments.

I read this. The one who says I've come to know him and doesn't keep his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him but whoever keeps his word in him the love of God is truly perfected.
[48:25] By this we know that we're in Christ. The one who says he abides in Christ ought himself to do what? Walk in the same manner. Walk in the same manner.

This is what we're called to do. The more closely you walk with Jesus the more like Jesus you become and the more you grow to show him in your life.
Our walk with Jesus is our Christian life. Now did you hear what I said there? Our walk with Jesus is our Christian life.

life. So are you making your life about Jesus? When you read your Bible does it help you grow closer to Jesus so that your heart is being transformed in loving him?

When you pray are your prayers reflecting your love for Jesus and for what he loves? Do you think about church life, marriage, singleness, parenting, sexuality, work, vacations, money, time, stuff, and life the way Jesus thinks about these things?

[49:36] Do you say, well I don't know what Jesus thinks about all that? Well, that's a problem. Spiritual growth takes place as we walk with the Lord. We build our relationship with him.

We have a spiritual responsibility and privilege gained by our position in Christ to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. Look at these scriptures. Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you've been called.

Walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. And then finally, only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

You have three different New Testament epistles saying the same thing about your walk with God. Do you think Paul was a little bit concerned about that?

So, everything we're saying about spiritual growth in the Lord Jesus is about walking with him in a worthy manner day to day.

[50:46] Not just walking with him, walking with him in a worthy manner. Right? If you're not bottom of the screen, if you're not making your daily life about Jesus, you're missing the point of Christian living.

God's God's So, what does it mean for me to walk with Jesus in a worthy manner? Well, we need to talk about God's Word, walking in God's Word.

You can't become like Jesus without living by His truth. So, listen, if you don't study the Word, if you don't read it, if you don't think carefully about it, if you don't apply and obey the truth, you're not going to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus.

Don't ride on your pastor's coattails on this. Learn from your pastors, your teachers, absolutely. Learn from us, but be responsible for your growth.

And now, one of the ways that you can do that is I'm going to ask you a question. You don't have to answer it. Please don't answer it out loud right now. What do you do with the sermon every Sunday?

[51:50] Let me ask it a different way. How do you help yourself become responsible for the truth that you hear every Sunday from this pulpit?

Because God's going to hold you accountable for it. And so, what are you doing to understand and apply that truth in your life? What is your spiritual plan to take the message that your pastors are delivering every Sunday for your growth?

What are you doing? to grow by those messages? How are you owning them? How are you letting it influence you, guide you, direct you?

Again, I don't want you to answer out loud. Just think about it. One of the ways that you can better own and be good stewards of the teaching you are receiving. That's the first.

I'm letting the cat out of the bag. I'm a pastor. I can't help myself. The first time when I hear you guys talk about it, and I'm glad you do. Listening to sermons from other people and podcasts or whatever, that's fine.

[53:00] But the first thing that I think of is, what did you do with the sermon you heard already? Before you go listen to other sermons, what are you doing with the truth you're sitting under from your own pastor?

How are you doing with you? See? Now I've had to deal with this conviction in my heart too guys. What are we doing with that material?

This is one of the things that we're confronted with as we think about God's Word. If you look at Psalm 119, 1-5, Psalm 119, and 1-5.

Suzanne, would you read that for us, son? Now that's just five verses in to a Psalm whose verses all speak to the issue of God's Word and taking it into our life.

And so did you notice the heart part in that? Verse 2, at the end of verse 2, who seek Him with what? Their whole heart. Please don't neglect the relationship of that seeking with God's Word.

[54:56] A heart seeking the Lord is a heart given to the Word. Alright? Alright? What Jesus is doing in you to grow you in His love is seen in your obedience to Him by keeping His Word.

That is, by living out His truth. I've shared some of this with you. I'll show you just to remind you. He who has my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me.

If anyone loves me, he will keep my word and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our abode with him. So we have a spiritual closeness in terms of God, our love for Jesus.

We are compelled to take in His Word because we love Him. And God uses His Word to draw close to us. This sounds like something John Piper would say, listen, as you become increasingly delighted with Jesus and with His good work in your life, as you grow closer to Him, you grow to be more like Him.

Jesus said we become like our teacher, so through His Word you become Jesus' learner. He instructs you in drawing near to Him and in becoming more like Him.

[56:23] And all of this comes by the way of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, taking God's truth and opening your spiritual eyes to understand and receive and heed so that you become obedient from faith.

The Bible tells us that this spiritual wisdom isn't confined to a body of words in the Bible. This wisdom is actually personified. It is alive in a person in Christ Himself.

That's what it means personified. In Jesus Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Walking with Jesus makes you wise. But by God's doing you are in Christ Jesus who became what?

Wisdom. Wisdom. You need wisdom about how to be married. You need wisdom about how to parent your children. You need wisdom about how to be a provider for your family.

You need wisdom about how to be a good church member. A biblical church member. A Jesus pleasing church member. I need wisdom about being a dad, a husband, a pastor.

[57:39] Where do we get it? In our walk with Christ. As we learn the Word. God. So the point here is that your growth in the wisdom and knowledge of God is found in your relationship with Jesus.

He is your wisdom. Pursue Him. Pursue Him. And you will grow in your understanding of how to live a holy, blessed, treasured, and God pleasing life.

The number one reason for the lack of spiritual growth is a lack of pursuing Jesus. Period. We can make all kinds of excuses.

We stay spiritually weak and anemic because we don't walk with Christ. If you walk close to Jesus, you can't help but become like Him.

You'll grow if you walk with Him. But you have to walk with Him. You have to draw near to Jesus. God said He will draw near to you. So, read the Bible to know and serve Jesus.

[58:52] Pray to know and serve Jesus. Go to church. Be married. Be single. Parent. Be male. Female. Work. Play. Eat. Drink.

And all that you do to serve Jesus. Paul knew the value and necessity of our growth in this wisdom and knowledge of the Lord.

So, he made it a constant prayer for those in his spiritual care. A constant prayer for those in his spiritual care. And it's like, Jeff Jackson, listen up.

You would do well to take careful note of this as a minister of the gospel. For this reason also, since the day we heard of your faith in Christ, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Constant prayer. This emphasis defined Paul's entire effort in ministry. We proclaim Christ, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom so that we may present every man

what?

[60:05] Complete in Christ. There's the goal of pastoral ministry. glory. It's to present everyone under our shepherding care complete in Christ. Every single one of you.

For this purpose then, Jeff Jackson labors, striving according to God's power which mightily works within him. Walking with Jesus in a worthy manner is impossible apart from walking in His word in a worthy manner.

Can you mark that down? If you're not walking in the word in a worthy manner, you will not walk with Jesus in a worthy manner. And your life will reflect that. Friends, we're not talking about a life that has problems.

We all have challenges, trials, sufferings, problems, failures. That's not how it's measured. It's measured by how you navigate those in the Lord.

What difference does Jesus make in all that? That's what we're talking about. All right, let me end this way for this, my part.

[61:12] Look at this quote. Right doctrine is essential to right living. It is impossible to live a faithful Christian life without knowing biblical doctrine.

Doctrine simply means teaching. And there is no way even this sincere believer can live a life pleasing to God without knowing what God Himself is like and knowing the sort of life God wants Him to live.

Those who set biblical theology aside also set aside Christian living. When we use terms like doctrine and biblical theology, we're not trying to sound academic or heady or scholastic or anything like that.

We're simply talking about truth. Bible truth. That's doctrine. Theology. Theology is the study of God.

Where else do we go to study God than the Scripture? Right? We've had some people that have come into our church over the... Are we seven years old now? Have we hit the seven year mark yet?

[62:25] Close? Well, over that years of history, we've had some people come and just a few and leave and they've said we're too heady, we're too academic for them.

Too serious. Too serious. And we're willing to risk that. Did you say that, brother? You did? Well, you're still here, so praise God. I'm not talking about you. I'm not talking about you. these people have moved on that I'm talking about. Praise God, brother, that God saved you and opened your eyes to the truth.

You know, we don't want to sound academic. We want to sound sober, skilled, serious.

Because these are the things that matter for eternity. And so when we're in this pulpit, we're not playing games. And if we are, go find another church. Because there's not much church about this one, if that's the case.

[63:36] Alright, questions or comments in the remaining minutes here? Anything you want to bring up from what we've talked about in the past or tonight? Any questions, comments?

Yes, PJ? PJ? I saw your problem in Poland. Oh, what? Walking, but boy, that would have been a hard, proud of tonight.

Yes. Not having that, being able to convert that, it would have been like, yeah. It was tough. Now, had I known that ahead of time, I still would have taught on this, but I would have worked that translation issue out before I came.

And they worked it out on the fly, but there's still some work to do. And the issue in Poland was conceptual.

They said, Jeff, we don't have a problem saying walk with Jesus, but in Polish, when we say that, the words that we use communicate you coming up alongside of someone and doing this.

[64:43] It doesn't communicate intimacy, closeness. That's the issue. that's what I asked. And I got a four and a half page response that is like talking to a seminary professor because the founding pastor has a brain like that.

Yannick. Yannick. Very, very bright man. He's the man that has the daughter, Anya, who is a genius. I don't know how many languages she speaks, but she's doing her dissertation right now on some aspect of Hebrew something because she speaks fluent Hebrew, ancient Hebrew as well, plus three or four other languages.

She's a genius. But if you met her, you wouldn't know it. She laughs and giggles and just, you know, she's just a normal girl, but get her talking about this and she'll leave you in the dust.

So anyway, yeah, yeah, that was an issue. Other questions, comments, anything, you guys? I'm really grateful for your attention. In the first verse that you were reading, you were saying that we were walking with Christ, but if you're not walking with Him, you have all the sins.

And you were saying what goes into you. Mark 7. Yeah, Mark 7. to me, I was thinking, people say that it's not their fault.

[66:22] They were exposed to this. They were exposed to that. And I'm thinking, you were born with all of that in you, and you're going to get rid of it, and you're going to turn to Jesus, and your excuse is not going to face you.

Right. So we can use this excuse on a number of levels. For example, I've experienced this in my parenting. So the sin being exhibited in my children's lives could easily be something that Satan used to discourage, and he did, he did do this, discourage me and cause me to ask myself, what did I do wrong?

Now that's not a bad question for me to ask myself if I take it to the Lord and examine my role as a dad based on what I know the scripture gives me to do as a dad.

What am I doing wrong? That could help me. But when I'm allowing the sin of my children to be assigned to me, I'm in trouble. Do you understand that? Because where are they sinning from? My heart or theirs? Theirs. You see that? So I am not responsible for the sin that my children do. Now I can influence my kids, but I can't make them sin.

[67:44] They sin out of their own heart. My spouse, Suzanne can influence me in a negative way as a sinner herself, but if I choose to sin in response to that, that's not on her, that's on me.

So nobody makes us sin. We sin out of our own heart by our own choice. Nobody, you don't make me sinfully angry, you make me mad.

No, no. You can influence me, but I don't have to respond like that. I can choose to respond a different way. Right?

It's big, isn't it? It's very real. So that's just one area, parenting or whatever, being married. Yeah, and it goes both ways. As parents, we can't blame our kids and say, well, you're misbehavior. That's why I did what I did. And I was guilty of that. Whether I was showing impatience or unkindness, that's my sin.

[68:53] Not theirs. No matter what they're doing, they're in there whacking each other's limbs off with a machete. I'm like, you know what? I don't need to sin. I will totally freak out.

But can I freak out without sin? That's the challenge. You've got to do something. You've got to do something. Yeah.

All right. Any other questions or comments? You guys are awesome. This is a good group. Crowd. Number. Praise the Lord. We get that many more over there, man.

We'll be. We'll be firing on all cylinders. All right. Well, thank you guys. We're planning to keep this thing going now. We have the men's conference coming up.

We'll have Sunday teaching, Sunday church, and then we will meet next Wednesday night. And I don't know if our guests will be here, our guest speaker and his wife will be here or not.

[69:56] We're still a little iffy on that. But we will meet next Wednesday night and then into the conference Friday, Saturday guys. And then we'll keep meeting on Wednesday night.

Right now, I think we end the Wednesday before Thanksgiving or the Wednesday before Thanksgiving week. And that's it till after the new year.

But we're trucking right on. We're not going to miss any Wednesday nights till then, Lord willing.

Okay? All good. Alright, let's pray. And we'll be officially dismissed and there's pizza and other stuff.

Lucy cookies too. Let's pray. Father, thank you for these wonderful, beautiful, smiling faces and eager souls. What a joy to my heart. Thank you for the way that you are blessing our church family, growing us in grace and helping us to make it about Jesus and all that we think, say, and do. We want you to be glorified in our lives. So, Father, please forgive us. Please forgive us where we have sinned in our attitudes, our thoughts, our words, our actions the last few days.

[71:08] Help us to be ever more mindful of these ways that we are displeasing to you in our behavior. And help us to remember that you have saved us to be pleasing in all aspects in our life.

life. And so, we desire to be what you've made us to be in all that we think, say, and do. Thank you for these wonderful blessings of your heart. In Jesus' name, Amen.